

Judge Spurns Spy Suspect's Proposal to Plead Guilty

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By the Associated Press

New York, Aug. 26. — Roberto Lamas Vallecilla, 35, a foreign language translator for the Federal Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in Washington, was charged in a Federal Grand Jury indictment today with conspiracy to commit espionage for the German Reich.

Vallecilla, a native of Colombia, said at his arraignment before Judge John C. Knox that he wanted to plead guilty to the charge, but the jurist refused to accept the plea.

Bruce Barton, advertising executive and former Congressman, headed the grand jury which handed up the indictment. The indictment stated the alleged conspiracy took place before the United States entered the war, making 20 years' imprisonment the maximum penalty upon conviction, Federal officials said.

Vallecilla has been employed by the Federal Government since February, 1942. The indictment charged that all alleged acts of espionage took place between September 1, 1940, and December 7, 1941, while Vallecilla was living in a New York hotel, and that the defendant entered into a conspiracy with German agents at Lisbon, Portugal, where he was a student.

U. S. Attorney John B. McNally informed the court that Vallecilla was questioned in Washington by

agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation two weeks ago, and at that time signed a statement indicating he had been paid more than \$3000 by German agents.

Judge Knox expressed surprise a Government agency would hire Vallecilla without exhaustive investigation of his background, and asked: "Do they take anyone who comes along down there?"

Assistant U. S. Attorney John Sonnett told the court most of the information it was charged Vallecilla forwarded to German agents was obtained from public sources. Sonnett said that one communication to Portugal contained information on American airplane production and was written in secret ink.